



JEFFERSON DAVIS

This photograph, never before published, was taken in Montgomery, in 1885.

"I WAS inaugurated on Monday; the audience was large and brilliant. Upon my weary heart were showered smiles, plaudits and flowers. But beyond them I saw troubles and thorns innumerable. Yet I do not despond, and will not shrink from the task imposed upon me. I thought it would have gratified you to have witnessed it, and have been a memory to our children. Thus, I constantly wish to have you all with me. As soon as an hour is my own I shall look for a house and write you more fully."

These lines were contained in a letter to Mrs. Jefferson Davis written February 20, 1861, two days after the inauguration of her husband as president of the Confederate States of America at the capitol in Montgomery. Jefferson Davis, hero of the hour, president of a new republic, statesman and soldier, was still the husband and father, longing for some haven of refuge from the cruel hour which the war must bring. He desired a home. He wanted his family by his side.

And by diligent search, he found a suitable house—the first White House of the Confederacy.

On March 4, 1861, a great steamboat came proudly plowing her way around the curves of the majestic Alabama. The mellow notes from her whistle mingled with the martial music of the caliope, quickening the heart of a waiting president—a loving husband, a proud father.

The old landing at Montgomery has never known a gladder meeting than that which followed the coming of Varina Howell Davis to comfort and smooth, as best she could, the pathway of him whose far-sighted vision had already told her would be a thorny road.

It was on this same memorable Monday that the first flag of the Confederacy had been flung to the breeze—raised by Miss Letitia Tyler, grand-daughter of former President Tyler—while "ten thousand hailed it gladly, and ten thousand wildly, madly, swore it should forever wave."

And Mrs. Davis was well pleased with her new home. It was, she said, a "gentleman's residence, roomy enough for our purpose."

The old mansion had formerly been the "handsome" home of Colonel Edmund Harrison, located at the corner of South Washington (now Lee) and Bibb streets. It was built by William Sayre. In 1825 Mr. Sayre entertained LaFayette in this house. It was from there that a sofa was sent to Bell Tavern, corner of Commerce and Tallapoosa streets, for LaFayette's comfort during a ball given in his honor. This sofa is now owned by Mrs. Westwood Sayre, of Memphis, Tennessee.

Mr. Sayre sold the house to William Knox, who disposed of it to George Mathews. Fleming Freeman was the next owner. Then it was transferred to Colonel Joseph S. Winter, who remodelled it and sold it to a Mr. Calloway. At the outbreak of the Civil War Colonel Edmund Harrison was the owner; then it passed on to William Crawford Bibb and later to Archibald Tyson, of Lowndesboro, Alabama. On November 8, 1873, Mrs. R. L. Render, of LaGrange, Georgia, daughter of Mr. Tyson, inherited the property for her natural lifetime on the death of her father. At her death, on May 6, 1918, her heirs, Miss Eulah Render, Mrs. Bettie Render Morgan, and R. L. Render, of LaGrange, Georgia, and Mrs. Robert Ridley, of Atlanta, came into possession of the property.

## Preserving First White House of the Confederacy

By JOHN TIPPEN

But none of these owners were as proud of their possession as are the present owners of the first White House of the Confederacy—the women of Alabama and the South.

The beaux and belles of Montgomery after the war, as well as the brilliant men and women of the sixties, spent many happy hours in the White House, but none of them were so happy as are the women who have carried on a continuous struggle for twenty-four years for the preservation of the historic old building. For on June 3, amid scenes which rivalled those of the inauguration of Jefferson Davis, or the arrival of Mrs. Davis, the first White House of the Confederacy was dedicated at Montgomery as a southern shrine.

The story of the struggle for the preservation of the first White House is one of compelling interest. Twice the women of the First White House Association succeeded in securing passage by the state legislature of bills making appropriations for the purchase of the building and the site, but the measures were vetoed by the governors in each instance. Undaunted, the women refused to give up. They toiled ceaselessly and saved money. During the Alabama constitutional convention of 1901 they cooked lunches and served them in the rotunda of the capitol to add money to their treasury.

The third White House appropriation bill was passed by the legislature of 1919. It required hard work on the part of the members of the White House Association. It took tears, tact, sacrifice and courage. At times the task seemed almost hopeless, and spirits less brave undoubtedly would have given up the fight. But the women of Alabama stuck to the job. Finally, an appropriation for the purchase of a site for the building was passed. Governor Thomas E. Kilby signed the bill. With money raised by their own efforts to purchase the building, the passage of this measure providing funds for the site assured the preservation of the White House.

The struggle for saving the first White House for the South was begun in 1897, with the organization of the Alabama Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Some years later opposition to the proposal developed among the members of the organization. Growing weary of trying to keep up the work in the United Daughters of the Confederacy, friends of the movement gave up the effort and formed the First White House Association, with Mrs. Jefferson Davis, queen regent and Mrs. J. D. Beale, regent. The office of queen regent expired with

the death of Mrs. Davis and other officers were elected from time to time. Mrs. Chappell Cory, of Birmingham, is the present regent of the association.

A charter was granted the First White House Association by the Alabama legislature on February 5, 1901.

Among the most valued relics preserved in the first White House are those presented the White House Association by Mrs. Jefferson Davis. They consist of furniture from Beauvoir, last used by Mr. Davis; his historic sword, chairs, bureaus; the table upon which he wrote "The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy"; valuable books used by himself and his daughter, Winnie Davis; bric-a-brac, vases and other articles.

These articles, prior to the purchase of the White House, reposed in the Jefferson Davis room of the state capitol. It was in January, 1919, that the White House Association was informed that due to the crowded condition of the capitol the articles would have to be removed. With aching hearts the women wrapped each sacred relic carefully and carefully laid it away in the basement of the capitol. Some thought this meant the death of the movement for the preservation of the White House, but it was actually the forerunner of the success of a movement which had been carried on for almost a quarter of a century.

In the meantime workmen began excavating on the corner lot next to the White House. It was reported that the building was to be demolished to make way for a garage. Something must be done or the White House was doomed. The White House Association sent an envoy to the owners of the building. When she returned the papers had been signed. The White House had been purchased, but the owner refused to sell the lot. The building would have to be moved, quickly. With tears and pleadings the legislature was induced to make an appropriation for a site. Victory was won.

A commission was appointed to select the grounds, and the first White House of the Confederacy now stands on a hill facing the state capitol, where Jefferson Davis took the oath as president of the Confederacy. In its restoration it is beautiful and complete—a memorial to President Davis and to the women of the South who worked twenty-four years to save it. It has been dedicated as a southern shrine, and in the future will house the sacred relics of the state and the South.



Jefferson Davis' room in the first White House. The furnishings of the room were presented to the First White House Association by Mrs. Jefferson Davis before her death. They have been arranged just as they were when Mr. Davis occupied the room. Insert—The First White House of the Confederacy, the home of Jefferson Davis in Montgomery. The building has been purchased by the women of the South and dedicated as a southern shrine. It houses numerous relics of the state and the South.